



403555

Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20545

April 25, 1978

gwp

V/ADM Robert R. Monroe
Director
Defense Nuclear Agency
Washington, D. C. 20305

Dear Admiral Monroe:

Earlier this month we discussed the Department of Energy policy regarding medical followup for those individuals exposed to radiation as a consequence of nuclear weapons testing. This letter confirms that discussion.

The present DOE guidelines for radiation exposure are published in Manual Chapter 0524, Standards for Radiation Protection, most recently updated on March 30, 1977. The overall philosophy is for operations to be conducted in a manner to assure that radiation exposure to individuals and population groups is limited to the lowest levels practicable. As applied to the Nevada Test Site, MC 0524 requires that onsite exposures be limited to 3.0 rem/quarter and 5.0 rem/year and offsite exposures be less than 170 mrem/year for uncontrolled populations and 500 mrem/year for controlled populations. These are consistent with the standards set and published by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Under present policy, adopted by the Nevada Operations Office of the Department of Energy in October 1971, [REDACTED]

- o Greater than 50% of a lung burden.
- o Greater than 10% of an organ (other than lung) or body burden.
- o Open wounds containing radioactive contamination or a radioactive foreign body.
- o Received exposure to external radiation which exceeds the criteria in Manual Chapter 0524.

- o Erythema or other indication of skin damage caused by ionizing radiation.
- o Clinical results that are considered suspect by the examining physician.

The followup program is, of course, tailored to the specifics of the individual case. Furthermore, a complete termination physical is required when such an individual leaves DOE or DOE contractor employment.

As a further extension of the policies embodied in MC 0524 and NV/MC 0528, the Department of Energy is offering a medical examination to any present or former employee of AEC/ERDA/DOE or its contractors who has a documented past radiation exposure from nuclear weapons testing above the current guidelines of 5.0 rem/year or 3.0 rem/quarter for radiation workers, and who did not receive medical attention comparable to that now provided to NTS workers.

Additionally, Dr. James Liverman, DOE Acting Assistant Secretary for Environment, has testified to the Rogers Subcommittee that he was prepared to take "immediate action" on the following efforts: (1) expansion of the DOE health and mortality study to all DOE facilities; (2) establishment of a medical followup program for individuals exposed to 5 rem or more in any one-year period; (3) initiation of studies through the National Academy of Sciences relating to Desert Rock exposures; and (4) initiation of studies of workers in the Navy nuclear propulsion program at naval shipyards and communities surrounding those facilities. As an extension of our existing policy to protect personnel involved in radiation-related activities and to minimize possible hazards associated with such work, we will cooperate fully with Dr. Liverman's staff by providing any information that we may have on those subjects.

Our policy remains unchanged in cases where an individual alleges that he has incurred an injury as a result of occupational exposure. In such cases, a medical examination is provided. If a causal relationship between the exposure and the injury is established, compensation and medical followup are available, without regard to whether the exposure was negligently caused by the Government or its contractors. The mechanism for such compensation for an employment-related injury will vary with the individual's employment status at the time of exposure. Thus, workman's compensation is available to contractor employees, veteran's benefits to former servicemen, and Federal Employees Compensation Act relief to civilian Federal employees. Information and assistance in following the appropriate procedures is available to former test related individuals through their former

employer or the DOE Nevada Operations Office (Safety Director, Post Office Box 14100, Las Vegas, Nevada 89114, 702/734-3237). Veterans should contact the special toll-free number recently established by DOD, 800/638-8300.

The policies are flexible and have been changed in the past to meet evolving perceptions of the risks associated with nuclear testing. In this vein, our operating policies will be immediately modified if Federal standards for occupational exposure to radiation are changed and the need for medical followup over extended periods of time established.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald M. Kerr".

Donald M. Kerr
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Defense Programs